DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 236 433 CE 037 672

AUTHOR Lombana, Judy H.; Pratt, Phillip A.
TITLE Communication Skills for Career Success: A Programmed Textbook. Book I: Overview and Active Listening.
INSTITUTION University of North Florida, Jacksonville.
SPONS AGENCY Florida State Dept. of Education, Tallahassee. Div. of Vocational, Technical and Adult Education.
PUB DATE Aug 78
NOTE 107p.; For Books II and III, see CE 037 673-674.
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Materials (For Learner) (051)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC05 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Communication (Thought Transfer); *Communication Problems; *Communication Skills; Content Analysis; Feedback; Independent Study; *Interpersonal Communication; *Job Skills; Listening; Listening Comprehension; Listening Habits; *Listening Skills; Nonverbal Communication; *Organizational Communication; Postsecondary Education; Programed Instructional Materials; Secondary Education; Verbal Communication; Work Environment

ABSTRACT

As the first volume in a set of programmed instructional materials to help college students improve their communication skills in preparation for the job market, this booklet presents an overview of communication skills and a section on active listening. Designed for students to use on their own, the format of the program is to present a situation in which a communication skill had not been used well and then give the student several answers about what went wrong or what could be done to correct the situation. The text also includes questions for student self-evaluation and review questions. The materials are illustrated with cartoon-type drawings. (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED236433

COMMUNICATION SKILLS FOR CAREER SUCCESS:

A Programmed Textbook

Book I: Overview and Active Listening

This project was funded through the
Division of Vocational, Technical,
and Adult Education;
Florida Department of Education;
Tallahassee, Florida.

Judy H. Lombana
Project Director

Phillip A. Pratt
Graduate Assistant

CE037672

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

University of North Florida
Division of Studies in Education
August 1978

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. Lombana

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Foreword

Communication Skills for Career Success is a self instructional guide designed for college and university students who will soon be entering the job market. The program is designed to teach three basic communication skills - active listening, assertive communication, and conflict resolution - which have been found to be intricately linked with career success.

The three-volume text and accompanying audio cassette tape provide instruction, practice exercises, and feedback in a format which allows individuals to learn the skills without outside assistance.

The authors wish to thank the Division of Vocational, Technical, and Adult Education of the Florida Department of Education for its support of the project. We appreciate the assistance of the numerous students and UNF faculty and staff for their critiques of the manuscript. Special thanks are due Mr. Clinton Reaves, III, who illustrated the text, and Mr. Jack Funkhouser, who coordinated the audio taping process.

J.H.L.
P.A.P.

INTRODUCTION

You almost have your college diploma; obtaining that degree has meant acquiring the knowledge and learning the skills which will "guarantee" your stepping into a challenging and rewarding career--or so you've thought. Yet, you've heard or read that the job market is flooded with unemployed college graduates--it seems that BAs are a dime a dozen. The thought of working in an area totally unrelated to your college experience or to your career aim is both discouraging and frightening. How can you find an edge in competing for the job you want, thereby making a successful first step in meeting your career goal?

The development of effective interpersonal communication skills is one answer to that problem. In numerous studies, interpersonal skills have been found to be one of the primary determinants of job success. Persons with high levels of such skills are generally able to secure desirable jobs, achieve promotions, and report satisfying career choices.

On the other hand, a lack of interpersonal communication skills has been found to be the primary cause of job failure. For example, 90% of failures on the job are due to breakdowns in successful communication; only 10% are due to a lack of specialized knowledge or technical skills. It seems that the main reason why people have difficulty in obtaining the jobs they want or in being successful in the job they have is that they have problems in getting along with--AND COMMUNICATING WITH--other people! Getting along well with others at work very often depends upon an accurate understanding of the emotions which accompany the words in the communication exchange between ourselves and the people with whom we work.

The goal of this program is to help you to improve your effectiveness in getting along and communicating with others in the world of work, thereby helping you obtain and become successful in a job which is appropriate to your training, experience, and career aims. To meet this goal, this program is designed to assist you in developing your ability to understand the feelings that may accompany the words of those with whom you work, as well as to assist you in improving your ability to express your own feelings effectively to others. In order to help you improve your abilities in these communication areas, this program will introduce you to, and provide you with opportunities to practice, the skills of active listening, assertive communication, and conflict resolution. By learning the importance of these skills in the world of work, and by becoming increasingly proficient in your use of them, you will greatly enhance your opportunities for success in meeting your career goals.

Instruction for the use of this text:

This is a programmed text. You will be presented with different kinds of informational and conversational material and then will be asked questions about what you have read. Once you have selected an answer to a question, turn to the page indicated after your answer. If you select the correct answer, you will be presented with new material to learn and, in most cases, a new question and a new set of answers from which to choose. If you select an incorrect answer to the review questions, you will be asked to return to the question to try a better answer. You will quickly notice as you read this programmed text that you will be asked to skip around somewhat from page

to page. So that you will read the material presented in this program in its proper sequence, pay close attention to the instructions that will be printed on each page of the program.

Following each separate book there will be several practice exercises contained on an audio cassette that accompanies this program. These exercises are designed to further help you develop a particular skill covered by the book. Instructions for the use of the tape will be provided at the end of each book, as well as on the cassette tape itself.

Now turn to page 1 of this program to begin learning about the importance of effective interpersonal communication skills in the world of work.

Book I:

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

ACTIVE LISTENING

Perhaps one way to contribute to your understanding of the importance of interpersonal communication skills in the world of work is to illustrate how a lack of these skills can lead to a breakdown in the relationships you have with those at work. In the following scenario two coworkers, George and Susan, will demonstrate several different examples of ineffective communication. As you read the scenario, try to identify the obstacles to effective communication between Susan and George, as well as the major factors leading to the breakdown in their working relationship, and the resultant ill feelings between the two coworkers.

The Scenario

George and Susan were employed by their company as management trainees eight months ago; their company's training program provides for their spending six months in a supervisory capacity in each of the four major company divisions. At the end of two years, following their rotation among the four divisions, George and Susan will be selected for permanent management positions, depending largely upon their performance during the training program rotation. Currently, Susan is working with the Design Division, and

George is in Production.

As the scenario begins, George is sitting behind his desk studying drawings submitted by the Design staff, proposing changes in product specifications. Just last week George ordered his shop foreman to change the machinery setup and he isn't pleased by the prospects of ordering another change. At this point, Susan walks into his office...

Susan: George, I think maybe we have a problem. I've heard some rumors that Production isn't too happy with our new design...I wanted to check that out with you--what's the story?

George: (leaning back in his chair, putting his arms behind his head and yawning): Oh, it's you again...Susan, you'll have to speak louder so I can hear you over those machines--what did you say?

Susan: (speaking louder now): I SAID, when is Production going to change over to our new designs?

George: (with some irritation in his voice): Look, Susan, we just changed our setup last week. We can't go around making changes every day just because you have some other bright idea. This is the third change you've asked for since we rotated divisions two months ago. What's going on? What are you trying to do to me, anyway?

Susan: (sitting down opposite George's desk, somewhat impatiently): There are a lot of creative, dedicated people in Design--you know that--you worked there for your first six months. Anyway, they feel

like no one listens to their ideas...and I think that they have a lot of good ones, too...it's been a long time since anyone paid any attention to them--or stood up for them. I'm afraid that they're becoming less motivated now, and it's becoming a very real problem for me. Look, I'm just trying to help the company and make these people feel like they're contributing, too.

George: (with sarcasm): Yeah---sounds like you're being a mother hen to me--trying to win a popularity contest, or something. I've got a lot of problems, too. Anyway, those Design people ALWAYS have bright ideas. They just don't know what goes on in the REAL WORLD--the practical side of the company--PRODUCTION! They think all WE have to do is change our machinery around whenever they get a new idea--at the drop of a hat. You should tell them to be more practical; you haven't had any experience in production--just Sales and a little Design--you should wait until you get where I am before you go spouting off about all these changes!!

Susan: (obviously upset, but trying to control her anger): George, it seems to me that we're having a problem communicating...

(Phone rings very loudly, interrupting Susan)

George: Just a second, let me answer this (picks up the phone, but still glaring at Susan) Yes, what is it? What? Yes sir, I'll get right on it--it won't happen again.

Susan: George, I'm feeling uncomfortable talking with you...I get the

feeling that you think we're competing sometimes...or something... but maybe if we talked things out...

George: That was my boss--says that we have a foul-up on Line 4--what are those guys trying to do to me, anyway? What did you say?

Susan: (with resignation): Never mind...you just don't understand...there doesn't seem to be any point in discussing it.

George: (getting up from his chair and looking down at Susan): Hey, Susan, I know that you're trying to make those people in Design feel good--and I think that's terrific--but, look, you're a woman, and you probably don't know a thing about machines. If you did, you'd realize how impossible these new drawings are--they just won't work--so you'll just have to forget them and go back to the old drawing board (chuckling).

Susan: (standing, with fists clenched tightly): You make me so angry! You're completely ignoring me--you're not listening at all! Those drawings are good, and you know it, and you should put them into production. You would if you knew what you were doing!

George: (in a very loud voice): Don't YOU tell me what to do! Who do you think you are anyway?! I SAID, forget about those designs (thrusting them back at her).

Susan: OKAY, all right, I'll just have to get Mr. Jones to persuade you...

George: All right! If that's how you feel, I'll get Mr. Smith to settle it!

Whew! Have you ever had an experience like that? Do you think such occurrences are common? How did you feel as you read the conversation between Susan and George? How would you have felt had you been in Susan's shoes? In George's? Take a few moments to answer these questions to yourself before going on with the program. When you have considered your answers to these questions, turn to page 6.

Very clearly, the working relationship between George and Susan has suffered as a result of their conversation, and ill feelings probably exist between them. Additionally, now their bosses will have to spend their time to resolve the conflict between George and Susan, a situation which might have been avoided.

Take a moment now to identify what you think was the major factor leading to the problem between George and Susan. Four possible answers are listed below; choose the answer you think is best and turn to the page indicated.

A. George was the major obstacle: he was gruff, defensive, and narrow-minded. Turn to the top of page 7.

B. Susan was the major obstacle: she seemed aware of what was happening between George and herself, but she was unable or unwilling to do anything about it. Turn to the bottom of page 7.

C. The situation was the major obstacle: the competitive nature of the company's training program made ill feelings between George and Susan very likely. Turn to the top of page 8.

D. All of the factors listed above inhibited effective communication between George and Susan; their inability to communicate effectively with each other was the major factor in the creation of the problem which now exists between them. Turn to the bottom of page 8.

A. You're partially correct. George did seem wrapped up in his own world and appeared disinterested in what Susan was trying to communicate. He seemed to let his own problems, his feelings of competition in the training program with Susan, and his stereotypic view of women get in his way of listening to Susan and of expressing his own concerns and doubts. Although it is true that George might not have been fully aware of all of these things, his predispositions and biases were major factors in the communications breakdown between him and Susan. However, there are other major factors which contributed to the problem. Go back to the question on page 6 and try another answer.

B. You're partially correct. Susan seemed to have some fairly effective communication skills, but she became sidetracked by the heat of the argument with George. So, while Susan seemed to have the skills to avoid such a problem, she either forgot or ignored them. However, there are other factors which contributed to the problem between Susan and George. Go back to the question on page 6 and try another answer.

C. You are very perceptive in realizing that the competitive nature of George and Susan's training program might have made negative feelings between them possible. In their concern with accomplishment and recognition for their work they might have viewed their relationship as one based on competition. This, in turn, could have made ill feelings between them more likely. However, this is not the whole story. Go back to the question on page 6 and try another answer.

D. Right you are! The problem between George and Susan was not the fault of their personalities, nor was it solely the result of a highly competitive situation. The problem occurred because George and Susan weren't able to recognize their feelings or to communicate these feelings to each other. As long as a communication breakdown exists between George and Susan, they are not very likely to get anywhere in mutually solving their problem. What's more, not only will George and Susan have greater difficulty in communicating with each other in the future, but now their bosses have an additional burden. George and Susan's inability to communicate effectively may even place their chances for promotion in jeopardy!

Now turn to page 9.

Now that you have observed the importance of communication in avoiding problems (like the one that George, Susan, and their bosses must now resolve), let's turn our focus to the general communications process. Communication may be defined as the interplay of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors between two or more people. When people are in contact, communication <u>always</u> occurs, whether or not they are actually talking, and possibly even independently of what they may actually be saying. As someone once said, we cannot NOT communicate!

For example, Susan told George that she was trying to motivate some of her personnel, but that she was having a problem. George responded by saying to her, "Yeah, sounds like you're being a mother hen to me--trying to win a popularity contest, or something." That's what he <u>said</u>, but he seems to be <u>communicating</u> to Susan a negative evaluation of her, impatience, irritation, anger, or perhaps even defensiveness at her wanting to stick up for her personnel. The point is that George's words seem to contradict his meaning--and since he doesn't express himself clearly, we (and Susan) don't really know what he <u>is</u> communicating. Similarly, later in their conversation, Susan said to George, "Never mind, there doesn't seem to be any point in discussing it!" Those are her <u>words</u>, but she may be, in fact, <u>communicating</u> exasperation or anger at George's making no effort to listen to or understand her problem.

Turn now to page 10.

Let's stop for a moment to review this very important and fundamental principle of communication. Using these two excerpts from the conversation between George and Susan as examples, answer "true" or "false" to the statement printed below, and then turn to the page indicated by your answer.

> People are always communicating with each other, and the meanings of those communications may or may not always be consistent with what they are actually "saying."

True.....turn to page 11.

False.....turn to page 12.

True. Correct! You have a good understanding of the principle that communication will always take place between you and your coworkers, whether or not you or they are actually talking, and sometimes quite independently of the words that you and they may use. In the situation between George and Susan, their inability to accurately understand the meanings of the other's communication, which are often quite inconsistent with their words, has led to a breakdown in their communication.

Turn now to page 13 for a closer look at the influence which communication plays in your working relationships.

False. No, this answer is incorrect. You will learn from all of the sections of this program that people communicate with each other in a variety of ways. The words that are used may not always be consistent with the meaning of the communication; in fact, what we say may even contradict what we mean. For now, go back to the question on page 10 and try the other answer.

Communication between people is either effective or it is ineffective; there is no neutral ground. Communication is often ineffective when it ignores the subtle emotional component. Communication which is effective takes into account all aspects of ways human beings communicate with each other.

Developing your communication skills can lead to four positive characteristics of the working relationships among you and your coworkers, you and your supervisors, or you and your customers. These are:

A. mutual understandings of information, feelings, and problems among you and those with whom you work.

B. a high degree of trust in your working relationships with others.

C. a high degree of openness in your working relationships with others.

D. a greater ease in resolving conflicts.

George and Susan demonstrated ineffectiveness in communication in several areas which, as a result, led to a breakdown in their working relationship. Take a moment to see if you can identify the four negative characteristics of their working relationship that resulted in their inability to communicate effectively. Then turn to page 14 to compare your answers with ours.

The following four negative characteristics of the working relationship between George and Susan now exist as a result of their inability to communicate effectively with each other.

A. There exists both misinformation of each other's particular problem as well as a misunderstanding of the feelings each has in their respective situations.

B. George and Susan are now likely to feel a degree of mistrust for the other.

C. Their relationship may now be described as closed and inhibited.

D. They are now in a situation which is likely to generate more conflict between them.

Now turn to page 15.

As we grow up, learn to talk, and increase our vocabulary, many of us take for granted the communication between ourselves and others. Very often we ignore the process of communication, or worse, assume that words alone are communication. For example, it appears that both Susan and George have problems in their respective divisions. Susan is pretty clear in explaining her concerns about motivating the Design personnel. It seems that George has problems, too (making extra changes in the machinery setup amidst grumbling personnel and possibly feeling that he may be "losing" in his competition with Susan). He even says, "I've got problems, too." But does George ever really communicate his problems to Susan? Choose between the two answers printed below the one you think best answers this question, and then turn to the page indicated.

A. Yes, he does. Turn to page 16.

B. No, he never does. Turn to page 17.

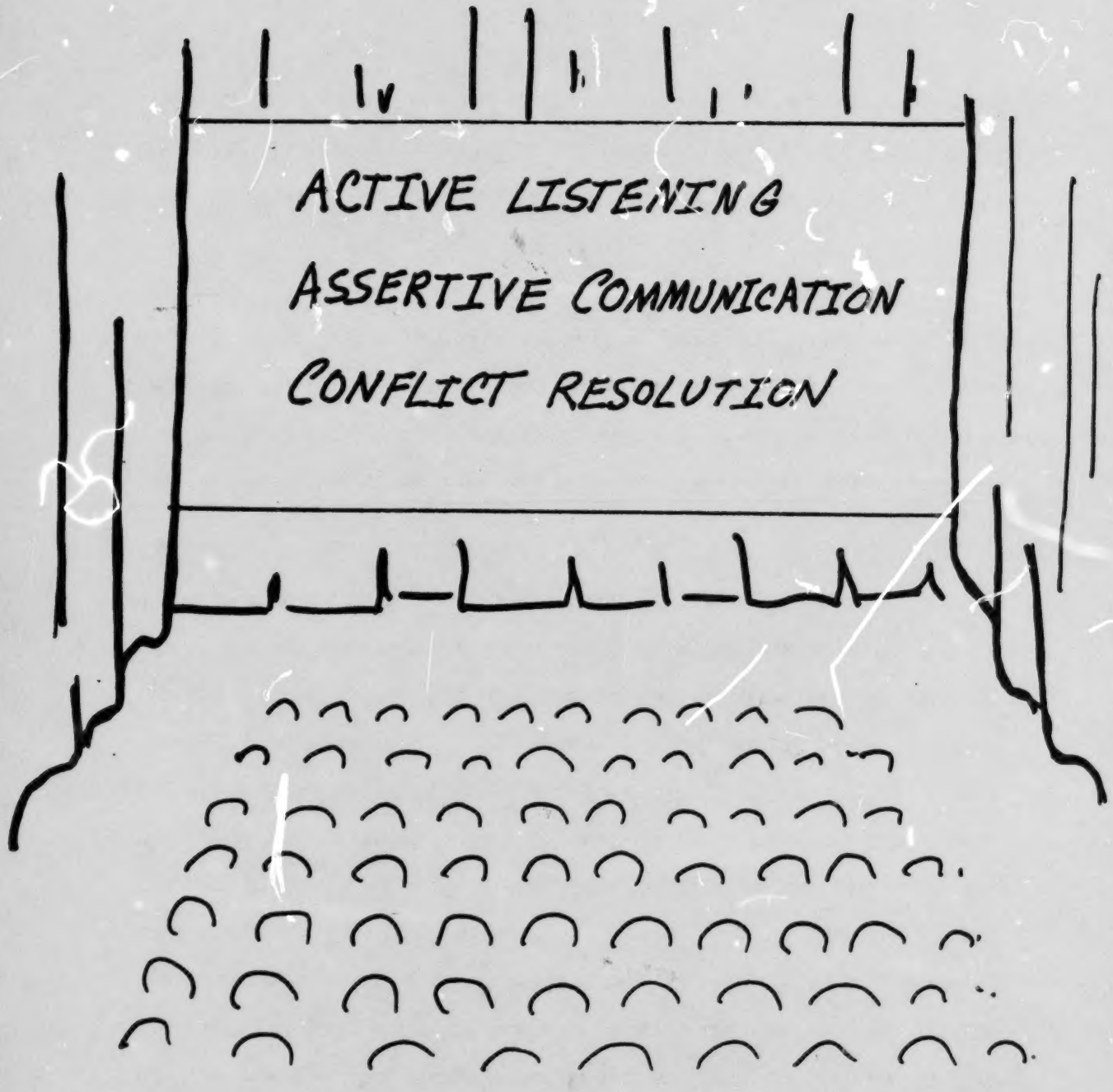
A. You answered that George did communicate his problems to Susan. While his words do indicate that he has problems and while he does act as though he has them, he never <u>clearly communicates</u> his concerns to Susan. Go back to page 15, read the question again, and try the other answer.

B. You answered that George never does communicate his problems to Susan--and right you are! While his words do indicate that he does have problems and while he does act as though he has them, he does not clearly communicate them to Susan. He might have said, for example, "Susan, it takes a lot of manhours to change our machinery setups. My personnel are still grumbling about last week's change. Isn't it possible for us to work together more closely to coordinate your division's ideas for changes and my division's ability to implement them?" Or, to more clearly communicate his problems George might have said, "I'm disappointed with the work I did in Design a few months ago---and I'm feeling a little discouraged in this division, too. I really want to do well, and I know that I'm feeling defensive with you right now..."

Very clearly, words alone don't always effectively communicate our thoughts or feelings; our words sometimes may even contradict or obscure what we're really communicating to another in other ways. Effective communication, then, is a skill; and just like all skills, <u>effective communication can be learned</u>.

The remainder of this program is divided into three sections: active listening, assertive transactions, and conflict resolution. Each section is designed to help you learn and practice a specific set of communication skills appropriate to your training and career aims.

Now please turn to page 18.


ACTIVE LISTENING
ASSERTIVE COMMUNICATION
CONFLICT RESOLUTION

The section on active listening, Book I, will focus on receiving communication effectively so that you can convey to the other person, "I really do understand your message; I acknowledge and accept your message (though I may not agree with it)". Active listening requires using more than your ears; it involves your using all of your senses, your experience, and your understanding of the here-and-now situation.

The section on assertive communication, Book II, will focus on your sending communication effectively so that you can assure yourself, "I did get my own meanings across without confusing or misrepresenting them." Assertiveness involves assuming responsibility for the communication of your own meanings rather than attributing ownership, or responsibility, for them, to the other person.

The final section of this program will address effective conflict resolution skills in a work environment. In Book III you will learn that even when effective communication is the rule rather than the exception in working relationships, conflicts will arise. This section of the program will assist you in developing conflict resolution skills which will encourage a WIN-WIN outcome for the participants in the conflict, rather than a WIN-LOSE or a LOSE-LOSE outcome.

Now please turn to the section on Active Listening, beginning on page 19, to learn about the practice effective communication in the world of work. Good luck!

ACTIVE LISTENING

You have seen that communication is more than merely an exchange of information between two or more persons. People communicate with one another to convey and reinforce their feelings about themselves and each other, as well as to share and to seek help in resolving a problem that they may have. It makes sense, then, that communication is effective and meaningful only if the persons who are trying to communicate are able to receive the other person's messages accurately. And only by LISTENING EFFECTIVELY can we be certain that we are best receiving another person's communication.

Listening skills are a crucial aspect of communication. Several social scientists have determined that 70% of our daily waking activities are spent in some form of communication with other people. Of that time, we devote over 40% to listening and 30% to talking; the remainder is divided between reading and writing. In spite of all that practice, listening is the area of communication in which people have the most difficulty. Part of this difficulty stems from the fact that many of us either don't pay much attention to our listening skills or do not know when it is appropriate to listen; many of us do not even understand fully just exactly what listening is or how to do it! One of our goals for this section of the program is to help you learn what effective listening is, when it is appropriate to use the skills which you will learn, and how to apply them to your job situation.

Now turn to page 20.

Stop for a moment now and think about your past experiences at work. When was the last time you felt that someone at your job <u>really listened</u>? What was it like for you then to feel HEARD, ACCEPTED, AND UNDERSTOOD? What do you feel like when your co-workers or your boss <u>don't</u> seem to be really listening to you?

.....please go on to page 21 now to find out how your experiences, perceptions, and feelings compare with those that other people have.

Since many of us assume that listening means "not talking" and that listening skills develop automatically and therefore may be taken for granted, most people report that a long time has passed since they felt that someone at work really listened to them. When someone does pay attention, acknowledges and understands what has been communicated--when someone actually LISTENS--most people find comfort in the experience. Most people have a need to be heard and understood by another.

The need to have someone listen to us--to accept and understand us--is particularly important when we have a problem. If this need is not filled, we often feel a distrubing sense of being alone or isolated from others. This is a very important point: wherever we work and whatever our job may be, we will be in contact with people who are experiencing problems. These problems may be temporary or they may be long standing. They may range from a minor annoyance to situations which affect the jobs of many people. The person with the problem may be ourself, our immediate supervisor, our co-worker, or a customer. In other words, in <u>any</u> job situation, every person experiences problems at one time or another.

Please turn now to page 22.

Let's stop at this point and assess your understanding of the material presented so far. Answer "true" or "false" to the following question:

In a normal working situation, the only people who will experience problems are those who are weak, incompetent, or emotionally maladjusted.

True.....turn to page 23.

False.....turn to page 24.

True. It is true that some people who experience problems on the job are weak, or incompetent, or emotionally maladjusted--or all these!! However, most people do not fit into any of these categories, yet all of us have problems at one time or another. We have--or "own"--a problem if we are unable to complete an assignment to our satisfaction, or if we are angry at someone else's sloppy work, or if we feel hurt that we were passed over for a promotion. You can probably think of many different kinds of problems that people experience as normal occurrences in their work. Having--or "owning"--a problem is not "bad", it is a natural, even expected, part of all of our lives.

Turn back to the question on page 22 and try the other answer.

False. Right you are!! You have quickly grasped the idea that having--or "owning"--problems is not restricted to certain people. All of us experience problems as a natural occurrence in our lives, whether on the job or not.

You may be wondering what "problems" have to do with "effective listening." Turn to page 25 and find out!!

You have demonstrated an understanding that all of us experience problems of one kind or another as a natural occurrence in our job experiences. It is equally important for you to realize that when most people have problems they find someone to talk to. Why? Because they want someone to share their problem, they want to feel accepted and understood while they are experiencing problems, and they need someone to help them work through their problems by LISTENING.

An effective listener is a great asset in any work situation. Research has shown that people who are perceived as good listeners are also seen as competent, intelligent, dependable, personable, fair, and trustworthy! Among these characteristics are some which you will undoubtedly wish to acquire as you enter the job market and strive for success.

The development of effective listening skills has an added bonus--you can be truly helpful to other people! Whether or not you are planning to enter a "helping profession" or are planning to seek a career in government, business, or industry, helping others brings great personal rewards to most people. Helping your co-workers to feel less isolated and more understood when they are bothered with a problem is likely to result in your feeling very good about yourself. Therefore, you can accomplish all of this--genuinely helping others, feeling good about yourself, and earning the respect of your bosses, co-workers, and customers--by the development of just one skill: listening!

Now please turn to page 26.

Before we go on, try your hand at a review question covering the material presented to this point. Choose from among the answers printed below the one which you think best answers the following question, and then turn to the page indicated by your answer.

If I can become a good listener, my boss will probably think:

A. that I'm a pretty sharp person. Turn to the top of page 27.

B. that I listen because I have very little to say. Turn to the bottom of page 27.

C. that I'm in the wrong occupation since I'm trying to be the office psychiatrist instead of doing what I was hired to do. Turn to page 28.

A. Very good! He or she probably will think you are a pretty sharp person! The ability to listen effectively is a skill greatly valued by all those who are heard. What's more, people who are good listeners are not only perceived by their supervisors as being sharp--they ARE sharp! When you develop your listening skills, you become much more in tune with the people around you. You will be able to gain insights into how people are really thinking and feeling, what motivates them, and how decisions are made--characteristics which most supervisors value very highly! These abilities will clearly carry you a long way in the world of work. Please turn now to page 29.

B. So you believe that your boss may think that you listen only because you have nothing to say? That is doubtful for two reasons. First, as we mentioned, research has shown that good listeners are seen by their bosses and co-workers as intelligent, competent, fair, trustworthy, and dependable--characteristics which are very clearly associated with job success. It's hard to imagine a person who has nothing to say possessing all of these dynamic qualities! Second, as you will see later in this section of the program, effective listening means much more than "not talking." If your boss views you as a good listener, he or she will undoubtedly value that skill very highly. Now turn back to the question on page 26 and try another answer.

C. So.....you think that your boss might wonder what you are doing in advertising (or banking or insurance or whatever) when your real talents seem more suited to social work (or counseling, or nursing, or whatever). Maybe.....but doubtful. Becoming an effective listener does not mean turning into an office psychiatrist for everyone at work who has a problem. Remember that research has shown that good listeners are perceived as competent, intelligent, dependable, trustworthy, and personable. These characteristics seem more identified with a success-oriented professional than with a bleeding heart! If you develop your listening skills, have no fear about your boss thinking that you should change careers. The only job change your boss is likely to consider for you will be a promotion!! Now turn back to page 26 and consider another answer for the question.

Now that you have a good grasp of the importance of effective listening skills in the world of work, let's turn to the task of developing your listening skills. Perhaps the best place to start is to examine five common approaches to listening which we all use at one time or another. Each of these approaches is listed on page 30 with a brief explanation and description of the approach. Read each description carefully. Try to identify the approach or approaches that you normally employ when you listen to others at work. Additionally, as you study each of the approaches listed, make a mental note of what impact that approach is likely to have on the person to whom you are listening. In your determination of the overall effectiveness of each approach, ask yourself this question: "Does this approach to listening communicate to the other person that I am acknowledging his or her message and understanding what he or she is communicating?"

Now turn to page 30 for the descriptions of these five common approaches to listening.

1. Often when someone comes to me with a problem I orient my listening to giving that person advice, suggestions, or solutions. As I listen I try to think up ways in which the person can solve the problem; then I try to convince him or her to do what I thought of by saying things like, "Maybe you should try..." or, "if I were in your shoes I would..."

2. Sometimes when someone comes to me with a problem I orient my listening to giving him or her support or reassurance. I may be thinking, "This person really has problems...I'll try to make him or her feel better..." Many times, in order to offer support, I find myself saying to the other person things like, "Things may be bad now, but they'll get better..." or, "I've had that problem, too..."

3. I often find myself asking a lot of questions of persons coming to me with problems. In my quest for information about their problem, my listening usually takes the form of "who, what, where, when, and why" kinds of questions.

4. Sometimes I adopt a listening approach to another person who has a problem by offering either positive or negative evaluations and judgments. For example, I think to myself, and even say to the other person, "You're not thinking straight..." or, "you're too smart to have a problem like this..."

5. Sometimes I feel that if I can offer a person with a problem logical and rational arguments, then he or she will see more clearly and solve the problem. So while the person is talking, I spend my spare thought time by thinking up comebacks. My response usually takes the form of something like, "The facts are these, here's why you're wrong..."

Now turn to page 31 for a closer look at these common approaches to listening.

Although there are obviously times when each of these traditional approaches to listening may be appropriate or effective, none of them usually communicates to the other person that he or she has been acknowledged, understood, or really listened to by you. That is, if you use one or more of these traditional approaches as a general procedure with others at work who come to you to discuss a problem, then your "listening habits" are likely to detract from your being an effective listener for your co-workers.

To help you understand why this is so, we will provide you with a more detailed look at each of these traditional approaches to listening and the effect each of them is likely to have on the other person. The first common approach, giving advice or suggestions, is examined on the next page.

YOU'RE NOT LISTENING!
YOU SHOULD LEARN MORE ABOUT PRODUCTION

1. Giving advice, suggestions, or solutions to other people who have problems can be an ineffective listening approach for at least three reasons. First, your advice may be premature. Upon how much accurate information is your advice based? How much information are you or the other person lacking? The problems most people have often involve various other people, situations, and experiences: giving advice or solutions based upon information from just one of these aspects of a problem is likely to be ineffective and may even detract from the person's coming up with the best solution to his or her problem. Second, your advice comes from your frame of reference--your point of view--NOT from the point of view of the person who is actually living with the problem. Clearly, no matter how well you think that you may know your co-worker, advice or solutions coming from you may often not "fit" the other person's point of view--and probably will not be an effective way for him or her to resolve the problem. Finally, if the other person blindly accepts your advice he or she may miss an opportunity to resolve his or her own problem and, as a result, not improve problem-solving skills for future difficulties. Ironically, many people come to us asking for advice when what they really want is a listener. A good listener knows that acknowledgement, acceptance, and understanding create the conditions in which another person can solve his or her own problem, which in turn, affords him or her an opportunity to become stronger in the problem-solving process.

The conversation between George and Susan in the previous chapter is a good example of this approach to listening. When George told Susan that she should become more practical and learn more about production to solve her problem, she became quite angry at George's lack of listening effort.

Now turn to page 33 for an examination of another traditional approach to listening: giving support.

I UNDERSTAND YOUR PROBLEM.!
HE DOESN'T UNDERSTAND.!

2. You may have thought that since we have identified a basic need in all people to be accepted and understood when problems arise, the offering of support and reassurance would be an effective approach to listening. While it is true that people who have problems need the support from others to feel less alone, it is also true that if only support is offered, then very little will be accomplished in the way of the problem-solving process. That is, support by itself--without attempts to UNDERSTAND--sometimes is very ineffective as an approach to listening. For example, offering support without attempts at understanding can possibly communicate to the other person, "I am uncomfortable with your having a problem, too; I want you to change from feeling badly to feeling well; therefore, I'll support you so you won't feel so badly--and so I won't, either." Although your co-worker may genuinely need and feel comfort in your support, he or she needs to be understood in difficult circumstances even more. Your offering only support or reassurance that "things aren't as bad as they seem" will likely contribute to a feeling that you are NOT understanding, since, for the other person things may seem very, very bad indeed.

Now turn to page 34 for our examination of the third traditional approach to listening: asking repeated questions.

YES... I MEAN
NO... I MEAN
YES....
WHO...WHAT...
WHERE...WHEN...
WHY?
BOSS

3. Asking questions, such as "who, what, where, when, and why" may be helpful in obtaining important information about the other person's problem, but such questions tend to distract the other from resolving his or her difficulties. Questions tend to be subtractive to communication, especially closed questions which can be answered with only a "yes" or a "no". That is, once a question is answered that part of the communication is over; usually another question is required to get the conversation going again. This can easily result in a choppy, one-way, and short-lived dialogue. These kinds of communications very rarely allow your co-workers an opportunity to explore their feelings and their problems. Later in this program we will show you ways to help your co-workers accomplish just that without peppering them with questions. There is, however, another danger in the traditional listening approach of questioning: questions may convey a listener attitude such as "once we have this information, we'll have the solution to your problem." If your co-worker feels as though you are putting him or her on a witness stand in order to come up with such automatic solutions which he or she was too blind to see, then that co-worker is likely to become resentful.

Now turn to page 35 for an examination of the fourth traditional approach to listening: giving evaluations.

YOU MAKE ME SO ANGRY!!!
YOU'RE A WOMAN AND YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!

4. Making evaluations, especially negative ones, may clearly put the other person on the defensive, resulting in a closing of communication. Remember that the co-worker who has come to talk with you probably needs to feel accepted and understood. Your judging his or her feelings or situation is likely to convey neither acceptance nor understanding. Once again, the conversation between George and Susan which appeared in the previous section illustrates this point. George's evaluation of Susan's lack of understanding of Production (because she is a woman) contributed significantly to her anger with George for not trying to listen to her.

Even positive evaluations fall short of really helping the other person solve problems by communicating with you. Positive judgments very often result in the other person's thinking, "He's just saying that--he doesn't really understand."

Now turn to page 36 for an examination of the fifth traditional approach to listening: offering logical arguments.

YOU SHOULDN'T ARGUE... WHY MUST YOU ALWAYS DEBATE?
WELL, I HAVE TO DISAGREE... DEBATE STIMULATES MY THOUGHT...

5. Logical arguments which communicate disagreement with your co-worker's perceptions of feelings about the problem, whether offered calmly or heatedly, very likely can provoke more arguments, risking a breakdown in communication. A person takes a risk in sharing a problem with us. If we point out where his or her thinking is inaccurate or illogical, not only have we NOT accepted or understood the situation, but, in a sense, we have also pointed out a second weakness--that he or she is even now thinking illogically. Usually, our co-worker will become defensive, resulting in either suppressing or forgetting his or her original feelings about the problem. In other words, in our attempts at argument, rebuttal, and persuasion, we inhibit or break down the acceptance and the understanding which is necessary in order to mutually resolve problems.

Turn now to page 37 for a review of the material presented so far.

We have presented much material about traditional approaches to listening; before we continue with the program, it may be helpful for you to try a review question. Choose from among the statements below the one you think best answers the following question, and then turn to the page indicated by your answer.

Why are each of the five traditional approaches to listening generally ineffective in helping a co-worker with a problem?

A. None of these approaches, if used exclusively, is likely to to communicate to the co-worker both acceptance and understanding. Turn to the top of page 38.

B. None of the approaches really encourages meaningful communication; in a sense, each is subtractive, rather than being additive, of a builder of communication. Turn to the bottom of page 38.

C. Both of the above answers are correct. Turn to the top of page 39.

A. You are partially correct. As a general rule, none of these approaches to listening really communicates both acceptance and understanding, although each of them may be appropriate in a particular situation. In fact, oftentimes these approaches communicate the very opposite of acceptance and understanding. There is another very important point involved in the question, however. Go back to page 37 and try another answer.

B. You are perceptive to realize that none of the five traditional approaches to listening really encourages the co-worker to meaningfully explore his or her feelings about the problem. In fact, these approaches generally tend to detract from such encouragement of more involved and meaningful communication. But you missed an important point in the question; turn back to page 37 and try another answer.

C. Very good! You have grasped the idea that none of these five traditional approaches to listening generally communicates the listener's acceptance or understanding, nor do they encourage further communication at more meaningful levels. We are NOT saying that you should never give suggestions or support, ask questions, or offer judgments or arguments. We ARE saying, however, that none of these approaches communicates to another person that you are really listening!

You may be wondering at this point how you, an ambitious, career-oriented person can ever abandon these five approaches and spend your days in silence as an effective listener. Relax: you won't have to give up your gift of gab. Contrary to what many people think, effective listening is usually not a passive process. Quite the opposite, effective listening is a very active process, requiring you to be constantly observing, thinking, and (usually) responding--abilities that are clearly well-suited for a rising executive. Therefore, by listening actively not only will you better understand your co-workers, bosses, and customers, and be in a position to genuinely help them as well, but you will also communicate your acceptance and understanding so as to encourage more meaningful communication in your working relationships with them.

Want to find out more about this miracle which "active listening" achieves? Turn to page 40.

Active listening is a non-judgmental attempt on one person's part to help another person explore a problem. To listen actively one must not yield to the impulse to console, explain, give directions, or argue. Active listening means not only listening to another person's words, but also using all of your senses and skills to listen to that person's entire message, based on your perceptions of his or her thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and the situation in which he or she is involved.

Active listening is composed of two interrelated skills: attending and empathic responding. Attending skills put you in a position where you may listen actively; they are a set of nonverbal skills which, in a sense, set the stage for you to really pay attention to what the other person is communicating. Attending skills also communicate nonverbally to the other person that you ARE indeed accepting, understanding---LISTENING! Empathic responding skills allow you, the active listener, to communicate to the other person that you are acknowledging and understanding him or her, as well as to encourage the other person to build upon the communication in meaningful, problem-solving ways.

The remainder of this section of the program will expose you to the skills of attending and empathic responding as well as giving you practice exercises in each of these areas.

Turn now to page 41.

Here is a test of your understanding of the skills of active listening that you have gained so far. Remember that your attending skills put you in a position where you may pay close attention to all of the messages the other person is sending. Your empathic responding skills involve your communicating to the other person that you acknowledge and understand the messages he or she is sending. Examine the events described below and try to identify each activity as either attending or empathic responding, and then turn to the next page to see how well you understand this basic difference between these active listening skills.

A. Joan observes Bob's clenched fists and tight jaw in their conversation and realizes that he is angry, even though his words express calm (attending or empathic responding?).

B. Mary says to her co-worker, "Tom, you seem to be discouraged because you thought that you did your best on the report, but your boss found a lot of things wrong with it" (attending or empathic responding?).

C. Bill says to Alice, "Well, things are bound to turn out all right next week" (attending or empathic responding?).

Now turn to page 42 to compare your answers with ours.

A. Joan is demonstrating her attending skills by observing Bob's subtle, nonverbal communication. She is picking up on the clues Bob is giving her, as well as identifying the feelings he is indirectly expressing about his problem. Joan would not have identified this subtle clue if she were not attending .... she may have been diverted by his calm words.

B. Mary is demonstrating the skill of empathic responding by communicating to Tom that she understands his feelings of discouragement about the report. Tom is likely to feel understood by Mary and may now feel encouraged to explore his feelings even further.

C. Did we catch you?? Bill is NOT demonstrating any active listening skills; instead he is trying to offer Alice reassurance. You can see that sympathy (as illustrated by this example) is quite different from empathy (illustrated in "B" above). Alice might feel somewhat comforted by Bill's sympathy, but she is not very likely to feel understood by him.

Now turn to page 43 for a closer look at the skills of attending.

Attending skills allow us to accomplish two things in our active listening to another. First, they place us in a position where we can listen actively. By employing effective attending skills we make ourselves more aware of all the messages another person is sending in his or her communication. Second, our attending to another communicates nonverbally that we are open, accepting, and really trying to listen. And we can accomplish all of this without even saying a word!

Sounds pretty easy? Well, it isn't difficult, but it may take some practice, especially if it is necessary for you to correct some long-standing listening habits. We all know people who never seem to give us their full attention. While we are talking they may fidget, walk around the room, glance at the clock, or take notes. When someone is not effectively attending to us we often feel as though they're not interested in our problem--or in us! You will remember from the previous chapter the conversation between George and Susan how Susan felt as a result of George's not paying attention to her. She was exasperated and angry at his refusal or inability to listen to her. George might have been able to tell her precisely what words she had spoken, but, very clearly, he was not really listening to her! Even if the other person may insist that he or she "heard every word we said--and can repeat it back to us exactly as we said it" we continue to feel uncomfortable, distracted, and unheard. In other words, we want more than another person's ability to repeat back word-for-word what we said--we want THEM--their complete attention!

Turn now to page 44 to find out more about these important attending skills.

Effectively attending to another means first physically attending. You can learn and develop effective physical attending skills by remembering and practicing five specific behaviors, which spell the word:

F..A..C..E..S

F.....Face the person squarely,

A.....Approach by leaning slightly toward the person,

C.....Compose yourself in this posture,

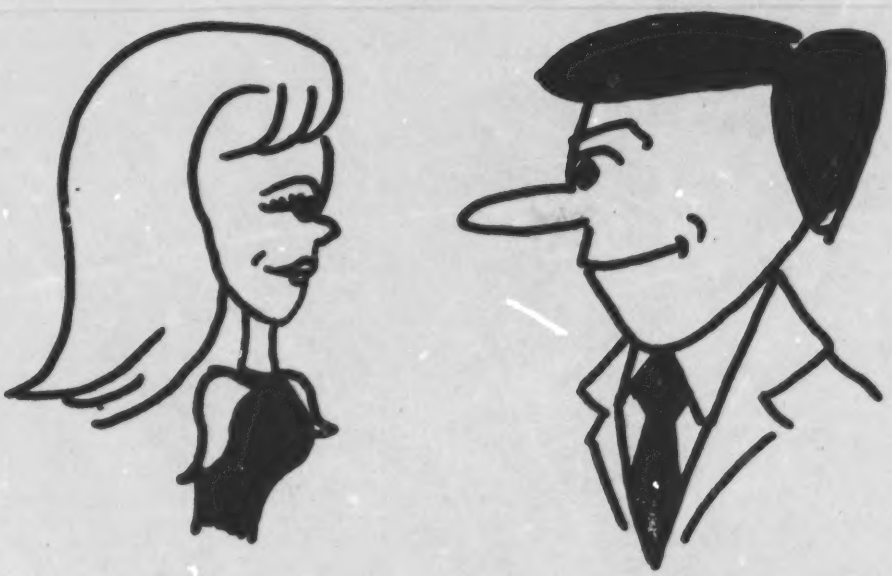
E.....Establish eye contact with the person,

S.....Space yourself at a proper distance from the person.

Let's take a closer look at each of these behaviors in greater detail.

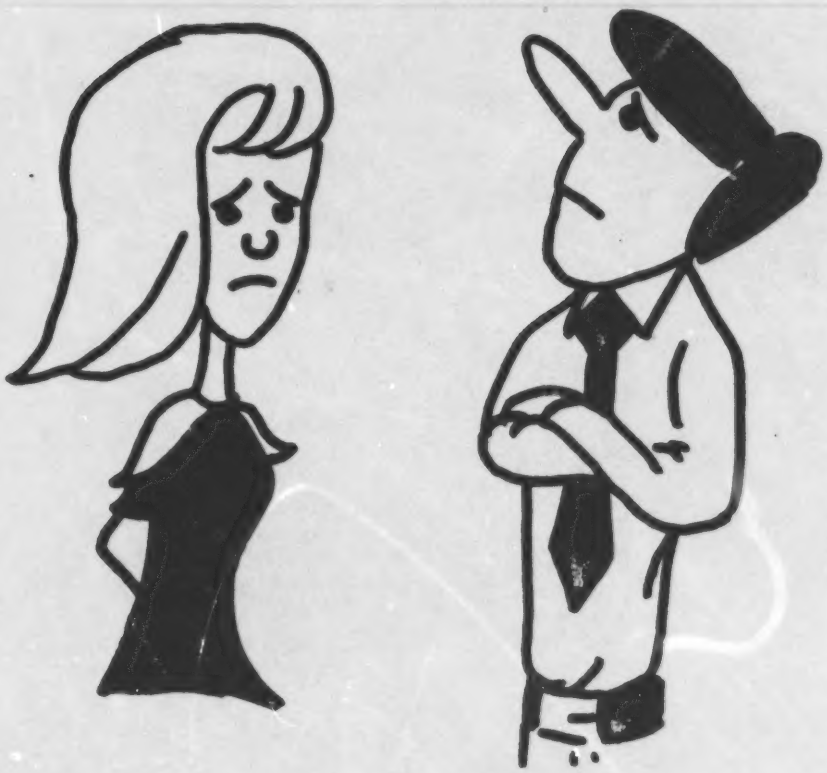
Turn to page 45.

F.....Face the other person openly and squarely. This posture demonstrates involvement with the person by communicating, "I am available to you." It nonverbally communicates to the other person how alert you are and how much interest you have in him or her. Turning your body away may communicate that you are withholding part of yourself. Facing the other person openly and squarely signals that you are available to listen.



Turn to page 46.

A.....Approach by leaning slightly towards the person. This is a non-defensive posture which communicates your willingness to become involved. Crossed arms or legs may signal lessened involvement--or perhaps even guardedness or suspicion. Slouching, hands behind the head, or feet up on your desk can possible convey boredom or disinterest. Adopting a posture which positions you in an approaching manner communicates your willingness to be open and involved.

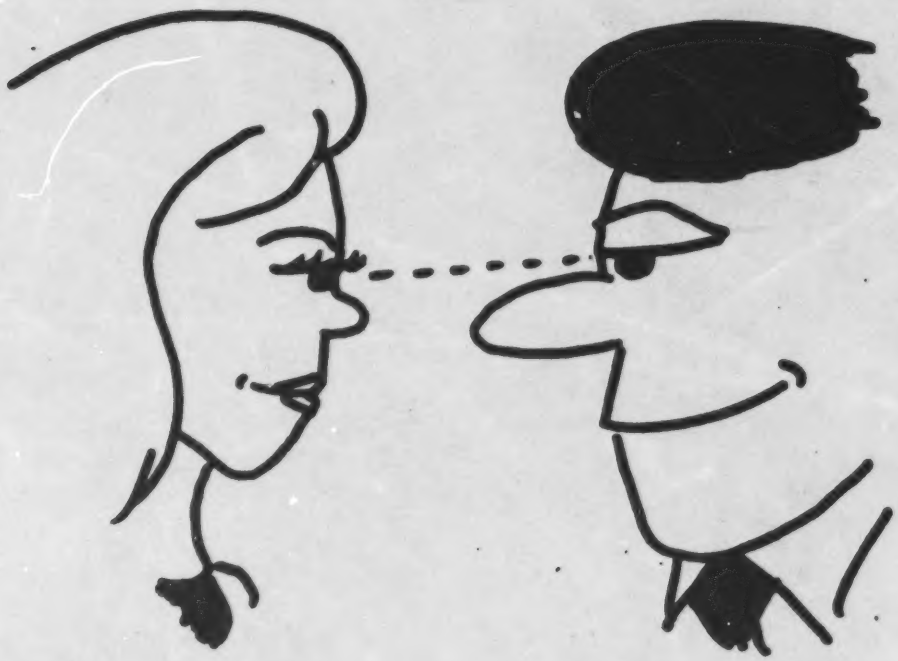


Turn to page 47.

C.....Compose yourself; relax in this position. Composure is likely to communicate to the other person that you are "at home" with him or her. Adopting the FACES behaviors too rigidly or too tensely may signal a lack of genuineness on your part. Too much relaxation can also convey boredom and disinterest.

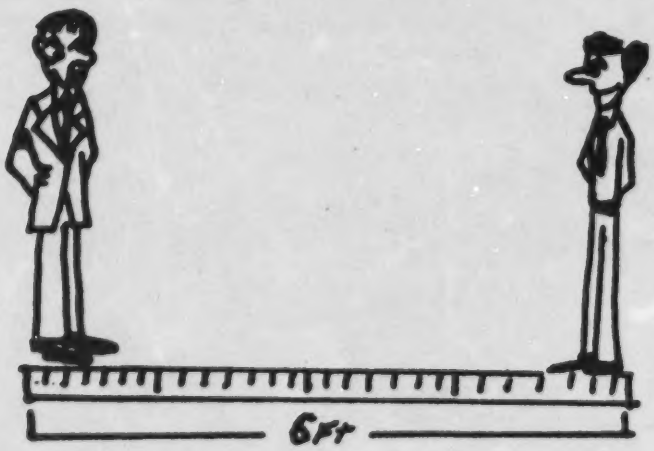
Turn to page 48.

E.....Establish eye contact. Many of our feelings are expressed in the eye contact we have with others. Not only are many feelings communicated through "the meeting of our eyes" but effective eye contact is a simple acknowledgement of each other's presence. Eye contact can be ineffective if it is too prolonged or intense (a fixed stare) or too short and uninvolved (a blank look); eye contact can become too intimidating if it is used all of the time or it can signal disinterest if it is used too infrequently. A balance of all of these variables, length, intensity, and frequence, is therefore necessary to establish effective eye contact.



Turn to page 49.

S.....Space yourself at a proper distance from the person. The distance which you establish between yourself and the other person can signify the degree of "closeness" or intimacy you are intending to allow. A distance of two to four feet is usually the most appropriate for communication between co-workers. This amount of space generally communicates neither too much intimacy nor too little involvement. Not only is the amount of space which you establish between you and the other person important in your communication, but the physical objects between you and the other person are also significant. For example, positioning yourselves in such a way as to have a desk between you might inhibit observation of the subtle, nonverbal messages being sent in the communication. Therefore, insuring that "nothing stands between you and the other person" is both literally and figuratively important in your communicating effectively with one another.



Turn to page 50.

We've covered a lot of material concerning physical attending. Let's stop here for a moment and check up on what you have just learned. Try this question:

Review Question No. 1:

Without turning back to the pages that you have just read, name 5 specific behaviors which you can practice to effectively attend physically to another person while listening to him or her.

Turn to page 51 for the answers.....

F.....Face the other person openly and squarely.

A.....Approach by leaning slightly towards the person.

C.....Compose yourself by relaxing in this posture.

E.....Establish eye contact with the person.

S.....Space yourself at an appropriate distance from the person.

If you had trouble remembering any of the behaviors, turn back to page 44 for more study, and try Review Question No. 1 again. If you were able to list all of the physical attending behaviors, congratulations!

Now turn to page 52 and try the second review question.

Review Question No. 2:

Answer "true" or "false" to the following statement, and then turn to the page indicated by your answer.

Without even saying a word, the way in which I physically attend will communicate how willing I am to be available, to be open and involved, to really listen to the person.

True.....turn to page 53.

False.....turn to page 54.

True. Very good! You have a thorough grasp of the importance of physical attending and of the specific attending behaviors involved. You have learned that the way in which you attend physically communicates the degree of which you are available for listening. Now you are ready to examine another attending skill. Please turn to page 55.

False. This is the wrong answer; perhaps you didn't understand our question or are still unsure about the physical attending skills and their importance in effective listening. Take some time now to go back to page 44 to review the material on attending and try the review questions on page 50 and 52 again.

You have seen that physical attending to another sets the stage for your being open and aware to another's communication: by using the FACES behaviors you are more likely to use all of your senses and abilities to HEAR the other's messages. Additionally, use of the physical attending skills signals to the other person that you are open and available for listening, therefore encouraging his or her further communication at more meaningful levels. But there is another attending skill which is needed to complete the attending picture---psychological attending.

Psychological attending means making a conscious decision to give another our total, undivided listening attention. It means to suspend judgments and evaluations of what we see or hear, to resist both personal and environmental distractions to our listening, and to concentrate on all of the messages being sent by the other person. For example, messages you may receive are the other person's words: but words are often only the tip of the communications iceberg. Social scientists speculate that communication is generally accomplished by only 7% verbal messages, 38% paraverbal messages (voice intonations, rhythms, inflections, etc.) and 55% nonverbal messages (body postures and gestures). By attending psychologically we are able to concentrate on all of these types of messages: verbal, nonverbal, and paraverbal.

Turn now to page 56 to find out more about the kinds of nonverbal and paraverbal messages psychological attending helps us to receive and to understand.

In our discussion of the physical attending skills, you learned how we communicate nonverbally to the person to whom we are listening. If we attend psychologically by concentrating on similar nonverbal cues that we receive from another, we can expand our understanding of his or her total communication. Let's try an exercise, beginning on the next page, that will illustrate how psychological attending to paraverbal cues will enable us to receive messages which may be obscured or contradicted by a speaker's words. Remember that paraverbal messages involve the way in which another person speaks to us: his or her voice intonations, inflections, or rhythms. This illustration will test your ability to psychologically attend to paraverbal cues. You will see how a speaker's tone, rhythm, inflection, and tempo of speech might become indicators of the speaker's feeling messages. Now turn to page 57 to begin the exercise.

For our exercise in psychological attending to paraverbal cues, we will use these words of a speaker: "I don't care what you do." Try to determine what the feeling message might be if each word in the sentence is emphasized. Reading each of the printed statements aloud, emphasizing the underlined word in each statement, will help you determine the feeling message behind the words. When you have completed the exercise, turn to page 58.

Statement	Feeling Message
I don't care what you do.	?
I DON'T care what you do.	?
I don't CARE what you do.	?
I don't care WHAT you do.	?
I don't care what YOU do.	?
I don't care what you DO.	?
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO.	?

Statement	Feeling Message
I don't care what you do.	I personally don't care.
I DON'T care what you do.	I really don't care at all.
I don't CARE what you do.	Do as you please; don't bother me.
I don't care WHAT you do.	You have complete free choice; do as you want to.
I don't care what YOU do.	I don't care what you do, but I care about what others do.
I don't care what you DO.	It's what you don't do that bugs me.
I DON'T CARE WHAT YOU DO!	Just get out of my office right now!

Now turn to page 59 to find out more about the skill of attending psychologically.

You can see that psychologically attending helps us to tune into the real messages of another person. By giving our total, undivided attention, suspending judgments, and resisting personal and environmental distractions, we become able to concentrate on all of the messages being sent to us by the other person, whether they are verbal, paraverbal, or nonverbal. You should realize, however, that sometimes people are very easily seduced or overwhelmed by the principles of paraverbal and nonverbal communication. This can happen by placing too much emphasis on these types of messages and in so doing, completely ignore the verbal messages. Clearly there is danger in this practice. Active listening depends upon your ability to use all of your listening skills to discern and process all of the communication being sent to you, not to rely on your paying attention only to one type of message.

You may be thinking right now, "I can see how the skills of physical and psychological attending are important to listening, but how do I know if I'm using these skills effectively?"

Well, part of your answer is on the next page, so turn to page 60.

Very clearly, the success or failure of our attending skills lie in the perception of the person we are listening to. We may be the most effective listener in the world, but only if the person to whom we are listening feels that we are indeed attending to them will our listening be truly effective. That isn't as difficult as it sounds: there will be clues to help you determining whether or not the other person perceives that you are attending. And, if you are actually physically and psychologically attending, then you will pick up on these clues and adjust your behaviors accordingly.

Suppose, for example, that another person is talking to you about a problem he or she is having and suddenly stops and says to you:

I can see that you're busy. I'll come back later ...

or,

You haven't heard a word I've said ...

or,

Never mind, I'll talk to someone else ...

These are pretty good clues that in spite of what you may think about your attending skills, the other person doesn't perceive you as attending--or listening!!

Turn to page 61.

On the other hand, suppose that the person with the problem says:

Hey, I really appreciate your listening to me ...

or,

Thanks for taking the time to hear my point of view ...

or,

Yes, that's exactly right! That's what's bugging me!!

These are clues that tell you that the other person does feel as though you're attending--listening--to him or her. Generally, as you attend to another and perceive that the communication is closing up, becoming circular, slowing down, or experiencing resistance, you may use these clues to adjust your attending behavior. Or, if you pick up clues that tell you that the other person is becoming freer in his or her communication, opening up, or exploring feelings more deeply, then you will know that your attending and listening behaviors are effective.

Let's stop here and check up on what you've learned so far; turn to page 62 for a review.

Suppose that your co-worker, Joe, is talking to you about a problem he has with production deadlines. He sounds angry. Suddenly he stops and says, "Oh, well, it's not your problem. I'll see you later," and he leaves abruptly. What do you suppose Joe is likely to be thinking as he goes out the door?

Select either statement "A" or "B" printed below which you think best answers this question, and then turn to the page indicated by your answer.

A. that for some reason I was not interested in hearing what he had to say....turn to page 63.

B. that I was listening but suddenly he figured out a solution on his own and wanted to hurry back to put it into action....turn to page 64.

OH WELL, IT'S NOT YOUR PROBLEM.
BOSS

A.....That's right! Although he didn't openly express his thoughts, his behavior (changing the subject and abruptly leaving) is a good clue that, <u>in his perception</u>, you did not seem interested in his problem. You have very accurately grasped the important concept that attending, or nonverbal communication, is best assessed from the point of view of its receiver.

Now turn to page 65 for another review exercise.

B.....Possibly, but unlikely. If you had been carefully attending and Joe had suddenly realized how he could solve his problem, he would probably have reacted much differently. He might have shown excitement and told you he just thought of a solution. He might have thanked you for listening and perhaps discussed his ideas for solving his problem. His words ("it's not your problem") and his behavior (changing the subject and leaving abruptly) seemed to be his indirect way of communicating to you that he felt put-down and unheard. In other words, Joe provided you clues that, in his perception, you did not appear interested in his problem or in listening to him.

Perhaps it would be a good idea for you to study this section again. Turn back to page 60 and reread the material presented on the clues others give us concerning our listening effectiveness, and then try the exercise on page 62 again.

Here's another exercise for a review of the principle that physical and psychological attending can provide clues which will tell us how effectively we are listening. Read each conversation carefully and then see if you can determine if Jim is listening effectively. What clues are present to indicate Jim's listening effectiveness?

Illustration No. 1:

Melissa (visibly upset): I think that I really messed up that job interview...I just can't afford to miss getting it...what am I doing wrong, anyway?

Jim: Well, things may be bad now, but they'll get better. I should know--I've had that problem before, too.

Melissa: But I haven't had a good interview in two months! I'm getting nowhere fast!

Is Jim's listening effective or ineffective? What clues does Melissa provide us (and Jim)? Turn to page 66 to compare your answers with ours.

You may have noticed that Jim was trying the support and reassurance approach to listening and that he was NOT being particularly helpful to Melissa. We can tell that Jim was not listening to Melissa by the clues she gave him. Her use of the word "but" communicated resistance to Jim, as if she were saying, "but you don't understand how I'm feeling about this..." Also, her statement that she was getting nowhere fast might well apply to her conversation with Jim since, in a sense, their discussion was going nowhere! If Jim would now practice effective attending skills and could become an astute observer of the clue Melissa is offering him, he might turn the direction of their conversation from becoming increasingly closed to becoming more open and more meaningful. Jim could respond to Melissa by saying, "you sound really discouraged about finding a job you want and you seem confused about how to do it." This kind of response would communicate to Melissa that Jim is paying attention to her, understanding her, and listening to her! She might then begin to explore her problem more deeply with Jim, and therefore set the stage for its resolution.

Well, did your answer pretty much match ours? If not, go back to the illustration on page 65 to see where and how you differed before continuing on with the program. If your answer was similar to ours--congratulations!

Turn now to page 67 for another exercise.

Illustration No. 2:

Mary (nervously): I just don't know what I'm going to do with that secretary. Every time this week that I've asked her to do something, she's snapped at me.

Jim: You're really having problems with her. I can see that this is worrying you, and you just don't know what to do about it.

Mary: That's right! I don't know what's bothering her.

Jim: It's really discouraging not to know what's causing her to act like that.

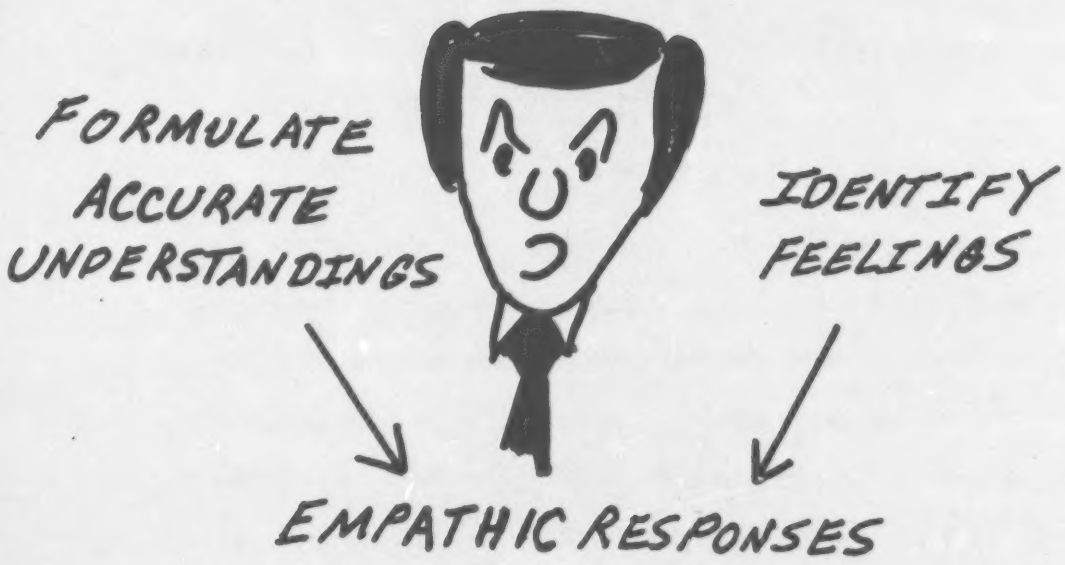
Mary (thoughtfully): Yes, I haven't talked with her about it, either... haven't really looked beyond my deadlines. Maybe if I speak with her I can find out what's been bugging her. Hey, thanks for listening...

Is Jim's listening effective or ineffective? What clues does Mary provide us (and Jim)? Turn to page 68 to compare your answers with ours.

You were probably able to tell that Jim's listening in this case was very effective. One of the clues he had from Mary to assess his listening was her willingness to explore her problem. When she said, "That's right," she gave Jim an excellent clue that he was right on track with his attending and listening behaviors. The icing on the cake was her final comment, "Thanks for listening..." Jim must have known that Mary really felt listened to by him.

Perhaps you observed that Jim's effective listening did not mean that he was passive or silent. Instead, he was very active in his listening. You may have also noticed that in this illustration Jim used none of the five traditional approaches to listening. Instead he identified her feelings and non-judgmentally communicated to her his understanding of her messages. In each case his response encouraged her to <u>open</u> the lines of communication between them. This kind of response in listening we call "empathic responding."

Turn now to page 69 to learn more about empathic responding.


FORMULATE
ACCURATE
UNDERSTANDINGS
IDENTIFY
FEELINGS
EMPATHIC RESPONSES

So far you have learned that a good listener is a perceptive listener. The perceptive listener uses all of his or her senses, abilities, and skills in physically and psychologically attending in order to understand the total message of the other person. But effective listening requires the translation of these perceptions into action. The effective listener is a doer, not a passive or silent partner; the effective listener is an ACTIVE LISTENER!

Empathic responding is an extremely effective way to translate listening perceptions into action which, in turn, will encourage more open and meaningful communication. Empathic responding means to accurately understand all of the messages being communicated (verbal, paraverbal, and nonverbal), to identify the feelings communicated with or behind the messages, and then to convey both acceptance and understanding of those messages to the other person. Empathic responding turns perceptive listening into helpful and productive listening.

Now turn to page 70 for a review.

Let's stop at this point to check your understanding of empathic responding. Answer "true" or "false" to the following statement:

If a person is extremely effective in empathic responding, then he or she doesn't need many attending skills.

True.....turn to page 71.

False.....turn to page 72.

True. No, you are incorrect. Remember that empathic responding depends upon effective attending skills. Our being able to physically and psychologically attend to another in our listening makes it possible to perceive all of the messages being communicated. It would be quite impossible for us to effectively respond to our perceptions without a solid base upon which to develop those understandings. Attending skills give us that solid base for effective empathic responding. Go back now to the question on page 70 and try the other answer.

False. Very good! You are correct. You have quickly understood that being able to empathically respond depends upon our ability to attend effectively to the other person. Effective attending behavior comes first; only then are we able to formulate our understanding of the message, identify the feelings that are conveyed with or behind that message, and empathically respond to the other person.

You may be wondering at this point, "I know how to put myself into a position where I can receive all of the messages--I need to attend physically and psychologically. I know how to tell if I am being effective in my listening--I can attend to the clues. But how can I formulate accurate understandings, identify feelings, and make up empathic responses?"

Turn to page 73 and find out!!

Your ability to develop accurate understandings and to identify feelings that a person has about a problem depends upon your ability to be EMPATHIC. Empathy may be defined as the ability to understand an idea, a concept, a situation, or a feeling from another person's viewpoint. Being empathic means to become aware of what it's like to be in another person's shoes, to feel as he or she is feeling. Instead of using spare thought time to think up ways to counter another's message with an argument or to pepper him or her with questions, you can develop empathy by asking yourself questions while you attend and listen to another. These kind of empathy questions may be:

What do I think the other person is sensing or thinking?

What do I think the other person is feeling?

What clues is the other person giving me?

What would it feel like to be the other person right now?

If, by using empathy skills, you are able to identify the feeling intent behind the other person's communication, you can build upon that to further the communication between you. Empathy skills will communicate both acceptance and understanding to the other person and will encourage him or her to explore or focus on feelings, look at the problem in new ways, and discover workable resolutions for the problem.

Sounds terrific---right? Turn now to page 74 to learn how you can develop these magical empathy skills.....

You've probably already guessed by now.....there is no magic way for you to develop your empathy skills. You'll have to work and practice at it. The remainder of this section of the program will be devoted to practicing the identification of feelings associated with the communication of others and the formulation of empathic responses. But, in order to become effective at your empathic responding skills, you'll have to develop these skills in a real job situation with real people, where these skills really count.

Now turn to page 75 to begin practicing empathic responding.

Let's start with learning to identify the feelings that may or may not be clearly stated by the other person. Read each statement printed below and then try to identify the feelings which are expressed. When you have studied each of the four statements, turn to page 76 to compare your answers with ours.

A. "My boss told me today that I've done better work than she thought possible. I knew that I could do it if I worked hard--and it really paid off!"

B. "No one in the office likes me...it seems that no matter what I do or how hard I try, I can't please anybody. Why do they have to be so mean?"

C. "I've been here eight months now and I haven't gotten a raise...John came here the same time I did and he was promoted two months ago."

D. "I can't believe it! The shop got every order out on time--and even got tomorrow's shipment started before quitting time!"

Now turn to page 76 to compare your answers with ours.

Statement A: "My boss told me today that I've done better work than she thought possible. I knew I could do it if I worked hard--and it really paid off!"

Feelings: happiness, excitement, joy: any of these feelings, or others like them would be accurate.

Statement B: "No one in the office likes me...it seems that no matter what I do or how hard I try, I can't please anybody. Why do they have to be so mean?"

Feelings: sadness, isolation, loneliness, discouragement, confusion: any of these feelings, or others like them, would be accurate.

Statement C: "I've been here eight months now and I haven't gotten a raise... John came here the same time I did and he was promoted two months ago."

Feelings: confusion, impatience, irritation, anger, resentment: any of these feelings, or others like them, would be accurate.

Statement D: "I can't believe it! The shop got every order out on time--and even got tomorrow's order started before quitting time!"

Feelings: surprise, delight, happiness, excitement: any of these feelings, or others like them, would be accurate.

How did you do? Did your answers compare favorably with ours? Just to make sure that you are proficient in identifying the feelings expressed by another person, try a similar exercise, beginning on the next page.

Listed below are four more feeling statements: read each statement carefully and once again try to identify the specific feeling being expressed. Then turn to page 78 to compare your answers with ours.

A. "Bob just turned his back on me...I really thought that my idea was a good one, but he just walked out..."

B. "I know that I shouldn't have trusted the report to that secretary. She always messes things up."

C. "Production adopted my idea!! I thought that I would have to fight them tooth and nail...but I didn't--they just accepted it!"

D. "I haven't heard from anyone about that job interview I had last week...I think that I did well and I know I answered his questions...but I just haven't heard."

Now turn to page 78 to compare your answers with ours.

Statement A: "Bob just turned his back on me...I really thought that my idea was a good one, but he just walked out..."

Feelings: confused, angry, troubled, irritated, sore: any of these feelings, or others like them, would be accurate.

Statement B: "I know that I shouldn't have trusted the report to that secretary. She always messes things up."

Feelings: angry, suspicious, mistrustful, disgusted, fed up: any of these feelings, or others like them, would be accurate.

Statement C: "Production adopted my idea! I thought that I would have to fight them tooth and nail...but I didn't--they just accepted it!"

Feelings: elated, delighted, surprised, excited: any of these feelings, or others like them, would be accurate.

Statement D: "I haven't heard from anyone about that job interview I had last week...I think that I did well and I know that I answered his questions...but I just haven't heard."

Feelings: confused but somewhat confident, uncertain but hopeful: any of these feelings, or others like them, would be accurate.

If you had trouble in identifying any of the feelings expressed by these statements, stop now and turn back to page 77 for more study. If not...congratulations! Turn now to page 79 for more exercises which will help you develop your empathic responding skills.

You'll remember that an accurate understanding of another's feelings about a problem (empathy) is insufficient by itself in active listening. We need to translate that understanding into action: we need to communicate both acceptance and understanding to the other person by using the skill of empathic responding.

Empathic responding does not involve the giving of advice, evaluations, arguments, or the asking of questions. By using non-judgmental responses while we actively listen to another we communicate acceptance. By making our responses based on an accurate identification of the other person's feelings we communicate understanding. And, by communicating to the other person that we are acceptant and understanding--that we are LISTENING--we encourage more open and more meaningful communication.

One relatively simple way to respond empathically is to use the following sentence outline: You feel_____because_____. This kind of statement communicates acceptance because it does not evaluate, give advice, or present arguments. This type of response outline also communicates to the other person that you have identified the feelings associated with the problem--and that he or she was being heard! Finally, this type of response outline lays the groundwork for the other person to open up the lines of communication at deeper, more meaningful levels.

Now turn to page 80 to learn more about empathic responding using this basic sentence outline.

Let's see how this basic response outline (you feel_____ because_____) would work in one of the examples of feeling statements presented so far:

Statement: No one in this office likes me...it seems that no matter what I do I can't please anybody. Why do they have to be so mean?

Response: You feel really down because people aren't friendly to you.

You may have noticed that the simple, basic response outline did not merely parrot or paraphrase the feeling statement. The response communicated an acceptance and an understanding of feelings which were somewhat below the surface of the original statement.

Now turn to page 81 for an exercise in formulating empathic responses.

Printed below is a feeling statement which we've used before in the program, followed by two possible responses. Choose the response which is most appropriate for empathic responding and turn to the page indicated to see how you did.

Statement: I know that I shouldn't have trusted the report to that secretary. She always messes things up.

Response A. You feel fed up with your secretary because you think she does sloppy work. Turn to page 82.

Response B. I know how you feel. I had a secretary like that once. Turn to page 83.

Response A. Very good! You correctly identified that this response communicates an understanding of the feelings which underlie the words of the statement in a non-judgmental way.

Now turn to page 84 for another practice exercise in empathic responding.

Response B. This is incorrect since the response does not communicate any identification of the feelings expressed--it merely states, "I know how you feel." In effect, all this response offers is some support; it conveys very little understanding. Additionally, this response moves the focus of the conversation away from the person who has the problem, thereby giving him or her little opportunity to explore the problem or ultimately resolve it. Go back to the question of page 81 and try the other answer.

Let's try another exercise in empathic responding. Read the following statement printed below and choose the response which you think is the most appropriate for empathic responding. Then turn to the page indicated to see how your answer compares with ours.

Statement: "My boss told me today that I've done better work than she ever thought possible. I knew I could do it if I worked hard--and it really paid off!"

Response A. "You feel confused because your boss praised your work and you didn't think it was possible." Turn to the top of page 85.

Response B. "Great! You're really on top of the world today!" Turn to the bottom of page 85.

Response C. "See, you feel great now--you should do that kind of work all of the time." Turn to page 86.

Response A. No, this is incorrect. You picked up on the use of the basic empathic response outline (you feel_____because_____ _____) but the identification of feelings was inaccurate. The feeling statement communicated very little, if any, confusion. Effective empathic responses must be based on accurate understandings, regardless of the structure used in the response. Go back to the question on page 84 and try another answer.

Response B. Terrific! Your understanding of empathic responding has grown to the extent that you are now able to free yourself from the basic outline of the response (you feel _____ because_____). You now understand that so long as a response conveys both acceptance and understanding it is an empathic response, regardless of the structure used.

Now turn to page 87 for additional practice.

Response C. Well, this response did use the basic empathic responding outline (you feel_____because_____), and it did correctly identify the feeling expressed in the first statement. This is an incorrect answer, however, since this response also included advice ("You should do that kind of work all of the time"). Advice-giving does not often communicate acceptance or genuine understanding in effective, active listening.

Go back to the question on page 84 and try another answer.

Try one more exercise in empathic responding. Printed below are four statements: try to identify the feelings being expressed and then formulate an empathic response, using whatever structure you wish, but which communicates both acceptance and understanding. Then compare your empathic response to ours on page 88.

Statement A: "These staff meetings are a waste of time! We're supposed to exchange ideas, but the chairman never listens to us!"

Statement B: "I'm not sure, but I think that my boss isn't too happy with my work...do you think that I should go to see him about it?"

Statement C: "My sales are way down from last quarter, but I'm seeing more people than ever...I haven't changed a thing in my approach, but I'm just not getting anywhere."

Statement D: "That new idea really turned everything around--I just couldn't imagine how such a simple thing like that could make such a terrific difference!"

Now turn to page 88 to see how your empathic responses compare with ours.

Statement A: "These staff meetings are a waste of time! We're supposed to exchange ideas, but the chairman never listens to us!"

Response: "You're irritated because the chairman completely dominates the meetings and doesn't ask for or accept your ideas."

Statement B: "I'm not sure, but I think that my boss isn't too happy with my work...do you think that I should go see him about it?"

Response: "It sounds like you're worried about his opinion and a little nervous about finding out."

Statement C: "My sales are way down from last quarter, but I'm seeing more people than ever...I haven't changed a thing in my approach, but I'm just not getting anywhere."

Response: "What you've done all along doesn't seem to be working anymore and you don't know where to go from here."

Statement D: "That new idea really turned everything around--I just couldn't imagine how such a simple thing like that could make such a terrific difference!"

Response: "You're really delighted about the way things have worked out!"

If you had difficulty in formulating empathic responses that were fairly similar to ours, perhaps you should go back to page 79 for more practice. If not, terrific! Now please turn to page 89 for the conclusion of this section.

In this section on active listening you have learned how important effective listening skills are in the world of work. You've been introduced to the principles of attending and empathic responding, which are essential to the effective reception of communication, and have received opportunities to practice these skills. When you are able to establish genuine and empathic communication by active listening to another, the person to whom you are listening is more likely to explore and share his or her feelings at deeper levels. In other words, the behaviors and skills of active listening are conducive to establishing more open, meaningful, and trustful communications.

Before continuing on to Book II of this program dealing with assertive transactions (the effective sending of communication), you may want to do more exercises in active listening. The recorded audio cassette tape, which accompanies this program, will provide additional work in the skills of attending and empathic responding. The instructions for the use of the tape may be found at the beginning of this program and on the cassette tape itself.